

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED: 05.02.2021

Coram

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice P.N.PRAKASH
and
The Hon'ble Mr. Justice V.SIVAGNANAM

H.C.P.No.1418 of 2020

N.Amulu

... Petitioner

Vs.

- 1.The Secretary to the Government,
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Home, Prohibition and Excise Department,
Secretariat,
Fort St.George, Chennai - 600 009.
- 2.The District Collector,
and District Magistrate,
Chengalpattu District,
Chengalpattu.
- 3.The Superintendent of Police,
Chengalpattu District,
Chengalpattu.
- 4.The Inspector of Police,
Prohibition Enforcement Wing,
Mamallapuram @ Thirukalukundam,
Chengalpattu District.
- 5.The Superintendent
Central Prison,
Puzhal, Chennai.

... Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying to issue a writ of Habeas Corpus calling for the records connected with the order of the 2nd respondent herein in BCDFGISSSV No.23/2020 dated 06.08.2020 passed against the petitioner's husband, the detenu viz., Natarajan @ Sevittu Natarajan, S/o.Elumalai, aged about 49 years, who is confined at Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai and set aside the same, consequently, directing the respondents herein to produce the body and person of the detenu before this Court and set him at liberty.

For Petitioner : Mr.A.Murugavel

For Respondents: Mr.R.Prathap Kumar,
Addl.Public Prosecutor

ORDER

[Order of the Court was made by V.SIVAGNANAM, J.]

The petitioner is the wife of the detenu, Natarajan @ Sevittu Natarajan, S/o.Elumalai, aged about 49 years. The detenu has been detained by the second respondent by his order dated 06.08.2020 in BCDEFGISSSV No.23/2020, holding him to be a "Bootlegger", as contemplated under Section 2(b) of Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982. The said order is under challenge in this Habeas Corpus Petition.

2. We have heard the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner and the learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the respondents. We have also perused the records produced by the Detaining Authority.

3. Though several grounds have been raised in the Habeas Corpus Petition, the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would mainly focus his argument on the ground that there is gross violation of procedural safeguards, which would vitiate the detention. The learned counsel, by placing authorities, submitted that the representation made by the petitioner was not considered on time and there was an inordinate and unexplained delay.

4. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor opposed the Habeas Corpus Petition. He would submit that though there was delay in considering the representation, on that score alone, the impugned detention order cannot be quashed. According to the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, no prejudice has been caused to the detenu and thus, there is no violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution of India.

5. The Detention Order in question was passed on 30.07.2020. The petitioner made a representation on 26.08.2020.

Thereafter, remarks were called for by the Government from the Detaining Authority on 26.08.2020. The remarks were duly received on 11.09.2020. Thereafter, the Government considered the matter and passed the order rejecting the petitioner's representation on 17.09.2020.

6. It is the contention of the petitioner that there was a delay of 16 days in submitting the remarks by the Detaining Authority, of which 4 days were Government Holidays and hence there was an inordinate delay of 12 days in submitting the remarks. It is the further contention of the petitioner that the remarks were received on 11.09.2020 and there was a delay of 6 days in considering the representation by the Hon'ble Minister for Electricity, Prohibition and Excise Department after the Deputy Secretary dealt with it, of which 2 days were Government Holidays, hence, there was inordinate delay of 4 days in considering the representation.

7. In *Rekha vs. State of Tamil Nadu* (2011 (5) SCC 244), the Honourable Supreme Court has held that the procedural safeguards are required to be zealously watched and enforced by the Courts of law and their rigour cannot be allowed to be diluted on the basis of the nature of the alleged activities undertaken by the detenu.

8. In *Sumaiya vs. The Secretary to Government* (2007 (2) MWN (Cr.) 145), a Division Bench of this Court has held that the unexplained delay of three days in disposal of the representation made on behalf of the detenu would be sufficient to set aside the order of detention.

9. In *Tara Chand vs. State of Rajasthan and others*, reported in 1980 (2) SCC 321, the Honourable Supreme Court has held that any inordinate and unexplained delay on the part of the Government in considering the representation renders the very detention illegal.

10. In the subject case, admittedly, there is an inordinate and unexplained delay of 12 days in submitting the remarks by the Detaining Authority and unexplained delay of 4 days in considering the representation by the Hon'ble Minister for Electricity, Prohibition and Excise Department. The impugned detention order is, therefore, liable to be quashed.

11. In the result, the Habeas Corpus Petition is allowed and the order of detention in BCDFGISSSV No.23/2020, dated 06.08.2020, passed by the second respondent is set aside. The detenu, viz., Natarajan @ Sevittu Natarajan, S/o.Elumalai, aged about 49 years, is directed to be released forthwith unless his detention is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-
Assistant Registrar(CS VI)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

nsd
To

- 1.The Secretary to the Government,
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Home, Prohibition and Excise Department,
Secretariat,
Fort St.George, Chennai - 600 009.
- 2.The District Collector,
and District Magistrate,
Chengalpattu District,
Chengalpattu.
- 3.The Superintendent of Police,
Chengalpattu District,
Chengalpattu.
- 4.The Inspector of Police,
Prohibition Enforcement Wing,
Mamallapuram @ Thirukalukundam,
Chengalpattu District.
- 5.The Superintendent
Central Prison,
Puzhal, Chennai.
- 6.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.

H.C.P. No. 1418 of 2020

gmr[co]
srg 25/02/2021